

equaling small payoff, a long gain equaling a medium payoff, and a touchdown equaling a large payoff. For example, the PASS play may result in the long gain resulting in a 150 credit payoff to the player. In one embodiment, all of the hidden plays and/or play outcomes may be displayed after the player selects one of the footballs.

[0028] For both the options revealed embodiment and the options hidden embodiment, the upper display 16 presents a first down marker 142 for the HOME team. The first down marker 142 tracks and illustrates the yardage gained by the play outcomes for the player. The football game illustrated on the upper display 16 continues allowing the player to select another football 130. The play outcome of the later selected footballs 130 is illustrated as progress with respect to the first down marker 142 and the end zone line 144. Progress may also be shown by a scoreboard 146 on the upper display 16. Although not shown in the pay table, payoffs may also be awarded for field goals, kickoff returns, punt returns, and other types of football plays. In one embodiment, the football game continues after the player scores, so that the player plays on defense rather than offense. In this embodiment, the footballs 130 show defensive play types when the player is on defense, and the player may receive payoffs for successful defensive plays or for stopping the opposing team from scoring or advancing the ball.

[0029] In one embodiment, the footballs 130 initially correspond to football formations. In this embodiment, when a player selects a formation the footballs 130 alter so that they correspond to individual plays using the selected formation. This embodiment may be employed with either offensive or defensive plays. Further, schematic diagrams of a play choice may be displayed.

[0030] In addition to the RINGSIDE CHAMP™ and football games described above, the present invention may be implemented in connection with a wide variety of a lifelike representations of other sports, such as, for example, baseball, hockey, basketball, soccer, tennis, automobile or horse racing, golf, track-and-field, or bowling events. In all embodiments, the game selected is other than slots, cards, roulette, dice, dominoes, bingo, or keno. In one embodiment, in addition to the wager and play features described above, the player may place optional wagers on overall outcomes of a continuing gameplay experience. For example, in the RINGSIDE CHAMP™ game, a player may be able to wager on such outcomes as who will win a bout, how many punches each competitor with throw or land, and the overall number of rounds in the bout. Likewise, in the football game, a player may be able to wager on such outcomes as the winner of the game, the margin of victory, the points scored by each team or the teams combined, the overall yardage gained or lost by each team, pass completion percentage, and other such statistics.

[0031] Optional wagers may be placed at the same time as the wagers that start the game, or they may be placed during the game so as to alter the possible payoffs resulting from the outcomes. Different wagers may be accepted based on the complexity of the game desired by the player; if a player desires a very complex game with many statistics to wager on, many different optional wagers may be accepted. Alternatively, a player may wish only to play a simple play with

no wagers other than the basic wagers used to play the game, and therefore the game will be limited to accepting less complex wagers.

[0032] In one embodiment of the present invention, a large jackpot may be provided to players who achieve an especially rare accomplishment in the game. For example, in the RINGSIDE CHAMP™ game, a large jackpot can be awarded if the player achieves a first-round knockout. Similarly, in the football game, a large jackpot can be awarded if the player scores an unusually high point total or if the player keeps the opposing team from scoring any points.

[0033] In another embodiment of the present invention, a player may pause a game before the conclusion of the game. Toward that end, referring to FIG. 6, the gaming machine 10 may be linked along with other gaming machines 10 to a “back-end” central host computer 150 via a high-speed local or wide area computer network 152. The computer network 152 may employ a data transfer protocol such as 100Base-T Ethernet or Gigabit Ethernet, which support data transfer rates of 100 megabits per second and 1 gigabit per second, respectively. Alternatively, the gaming machines 10 and the host computer 150 may each be outfitted with transceivers that support two-way wireless communication. Each gaming machine 10 is assigned a respective permanent identification number (PIN) for identifying the machine 10 to the host computer 150 and allowing the host computer 150 to address the machine 10.

[0034] The central computer 150 may be used to extract accounting data from the individual gaming machines 10 as well as provide player tracking. An example of a data collection system is described in U.S. Pat. Ser. No. 4,283, 709 issued to Lucero et al. Network systems such as described in Lucero et al. allow the host computer 150 to monitor the usage and payout, collectively known as audit data, of the individual gaming machines 10. This audit data includes data related to the number of coins or tokens inserted into the machine, the number of times the machine has been played, the amount paid in raises, the number and the type of jackpots paid by the machine, the number of door openings, etc. The host computer 150 can then compile an accounting report based on the audit data from each of the individual gaming machines 10. This report can then be used by management, for example, to assess the profitability of the individual gaming machines 10.

[0035] Player tracking, as the name indicates, involves tracking individual player usage of the gaming machines 10. In a typical player tracking system, the player is issued a player identification card 154 which has encoded thereon a player identifier such as a personal identification number or code that uniquely identifies the player. The player identification card 154 may be in the form of a smart card, magnetic card, or other memory device and may also be used for cashless gaming. If the card 154 is used for cashless gaming, funds may be stored directly on the card or in a database at the host computer 150. The individual gaming machines 10 are each fitted with a respective card reader 156 into which the player inserts a player tracking card 154 prior to playing the associated gaming machine 10. The card reader 156 reads the personal identifier off the card 154 and informs the host computer 150 linked thereto of the player's subsequent gaming activity. The host computer 150 preferably includes a database 158 containing a personal record